

City of Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities
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>>Bonnie: Good evening. Thanks, everyone, for joining us. I'm going to remind folks to mute yourself if you're not actively responding to things in the meeting. And as far as pronouns, sometimes people like sharing them as part of their identity.

>>It doesn't make sense to me.

>>Bonnie: Well, we can have a conversation about that outside of this meeting.

>>It just doesn't make sense. And I'd like to understand it. I truly would. Because I don't, you know, people -- people can do what they want, but I'd like to understand why.

>>Bonnie: Sure. We can have a conversation outside of this meeting. All right. I see that most but not everyone is here. I just want to give it --

>>We can't get Pauline in.

>>Bonnie: Okay. Then let's --

>>And she's fussing about it.

>>Adrienne: Ginny, if I e-mail a number and the pass code again to you, will that happen helpful or putting it in the chat?

>>Yeah. Send me a quick e-mail and then let me see what I can do to help her.

>>Adrienne: Okay. Hold on. Give me --

>>I'm going to drop out until I can get her in.

>>Adrienne: Sure thing.

>>I'm going to drop out right now and get her in.

>>Adrienne: Okay. Great. This is coming.

>>All right.

>>Jeff Dougan: Bonnie, this is Jeff Dougan from MOD. I didn't want you to be scared, but I'm going to go turn off my camera. I have to get my dogs calmed down, they're barking up a storm outside, so let me get them calmed down.

>>Bonnie: Not a problem.

>>Jeff Dougan: Sorry. I didn't want them to upset the neighbors.

>>Bonnie: All right. Sorry. I'm on a different computer than I'm used to and I'm just trying to pull up the agenda. It looks like we're missing Holly and Katie.

>>Adrienne: Holly is on her way in.

>>Bonnie: Great.

>>Adrienne: And both of our guest speakers are here.

>>Bonnie: Yes. Welcome. Thank you for joining us this evening. I'm going to call the meeting to order.

And -- recording in progress -- thank you. Just a reminder to everyone, when you speak if you can just say who you are before you speak, that would be great, so that everybody has full access. And if we can refrain from trying to speak over people, you can either use the raise hand function, physically raise your hand, send me a chat message, or if none of those are accessible to you, wait for a break in conversation to let me know that you would like to speak. But otherwise, let's dive in.

Welcome. Adrienne, do you want to introduce Sarah?

>>Adrienne: Sorry. I'm muted. Sure thing. Thank you, Chair Denis. I would like to introduce Sarah Nechamen. Sarah is with the DPPC and will be spending 10, 15 minutes with the group talking about the DPPC and what they offer. I know Sarah from my previous role at Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong and she is reaching out not only to this Commission, but other Commissions to share about the DPPC.

So I will turn it over to her.

>>I'm in.

>>Adrienne: Wonderful. So I will turn it over to Sarah. And Sarah, you are able, I believe, to share your screen for anything you want to share.

>>Sarah Nechamen: Perfect. Thank you so much. I'm going to go ahead and share here. Thanks for the intro. Like Adrienne said, I'm from the Disabled Persons Protection Commission, or the DPPC. And we'll be talking a bit about what the DPPC is and about our abuse reporting hotline.

We've been doing outreach to commissions around the state trying to get folks aware of just who we are in case any of you ever have reason to make a report of abuse and so that you can then send that information to other people in Somerville or other people that you're connected to. Because we're trying to get the word out mostly to the general public.

So the DPPC is an independent state agency responsible for investigating abuse by caregivers against adults with disabilities. So by adult, we're talking about age 18 to 59, with

a disability we mean anybody who needs assistance with some or all of their daily living needs. And caregivers can be professionals, family members, anybody who is helping that person meet some of those daily living needs.

This is how we fit in with some other agencies that you might be familiar with from an age perspective. So if the victim is younger than 18, that report of abuse would go to the Department of Children & Families, or DCF, and their number is at the bottom here as well, 1- 800- 792- 5200. If they're 18 to 59 and they have a disability that report comes to us. Age 60 plus, that report goes to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, you can call them at 1- 800- 922- 2275.

If you do suspect abuse of adult with a disability, you would call this number. This is our abuse reporting hotline. I recommend writing this number down or putting it in your phone, whatever is going to make it available to you if you ever need it. So that number is 1- 800- 426- 9009. You can also find that on our website if you Google DPPC Massachusetts, it's also on the bottom right of every slide on this presentation.

You would call this number even if you have no proof that abuse is happening. The standard for reporting in Massachusetts is just reasonable cause to believe that abuse is happening, but you can also think about as suspicion. So suspicion is not I am one hundred percent sure I have proof, I have evidence, I have conducted my own investigation. Suspicion is just I think that something is happening here. Okay.

And it's okay to be wrong. And it's okay to call the number and find that, you know, it's out of our jurisdiction, we weren't able to investigate it. We'll just send that report where it needs to go. So I'd always err on the side of reporting.

When you call that number, the person on the other end of the line is going to ask you a few basic questions, what happened, when, where, who was involved. Give them as much information as you have. If you don't know the answer to something, it's okay to say "I don't know." It's okay to say it over and over again. We had someone report once and all they had was a license plate number and we were still able to do that investigation and figure out what happened.

So this is kind of the process once you do call in. The person at the other end of the hotline is going to send that report with where it needs to go. The first place they might send it to an investigator. This investigator might be from DPPC or from one of our partner agencies, DDS, DMH, MRC. They are civil investigators, not criminal. Their job is fact finding. They are conducting interviews. They are reviewing evidence and they're trying to figure out what happened.

If they find that, yes, abuse did happen, they can make these protective services recommendations. So these are recommendations to either support the victim to move on from the abuse, things like counseling, healthcare, peer support, transportation, or to prevent future abuse. So that can look like recommending respite services for a caregiver who is just overwhelmed, staff training, policy changes or staffing ratio changes for a professional caregiver who is maybe doing what they were told to do, but someone still got hurt, so we need to look at how things are being done and the policies and procedures. Or agency action, DPPC cannot fire people. We don't have the authority. But the agencies that are employing these professional caregivers are often looking at our investigation to figure out what they should do. Should they keep this person or should they terminate them.

We also have a new abuser registry. So if somebody who is working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities has been found to have committed abuse, they can get put on this registry. And then they will not be allowed to turn around and get a different job with that same population. So this is to prevent people from abusing someone over here and then doing it again somewhere else.

So in addition to the civil investigator, the hotline person might also send it to other agencies, DCF or EOEA if the age range is a bit different than what we can do. DPH, other agencies like that.

We also have a state police detective unit housed at DPPC that is screening all of the reports that come in for criminal abuse. And they can conduct a criminal investigation alongside our civil one. And that just makes sure that there's more communication and information sharing between those two groups.

Finally, we have a sexual assault response unit. They are screening every report that comes in for sexual abuse and they can work directly with survivors to get them the resources and support that they need.

I briefly want to mention mandated reporters. Anybody can and should make a report of abuse when you suspect that it's happening. But mandated reporters are specific people who are legally required to make that report based on their profession.

So I mention this in case anybody on the call is a mandated reporter or if you know any groups of mandated reporters in Somerville that will benefit from a training on mandated reporting. So these are folks like healthcare workers, teachers, police officers, and anyone working directly with people with disabilities on kind of a daily basis.

So this is our flyer for our trainings. I'm happy to, you

know, send that out if anybody wants a copy, they can contact us and we can set something up. And this is my contact information. So my e-mail is there if anybody wants to reach out, wants more materials, wants to schedule a separate training, or has additional questions. I'm also happy to answer any questions right now if we still have the time for it.

>>Excuse me. I don't know whether I'm allowed to speak or not. This is Pauline.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Hi, Pauline. Do you have something related to this?

>>Yes, I have a question.

>>Bonnie: Great. After you call in, I see a raised hand.

>>Are blind people, you know, what's the word I want, excluded from this? Because we have a disability as well and it doesn't seem like the agencies that Sarah listed encompass that.

>>Sarah Nechamen: Uh- huh. So blind people would be included if they need assistance with some of those daily living needs. So some people who are blind are perfectly able to take care of everything without assistance, and then because DPPC is only looking at abuse by caregivers, if somebody doesn't need a caregiver or doesn't have one, then they wouldn't fall under DPPC.

>>Okay. Thank you.

>>Sarah Nechamen: Thank you.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Pauline. And thank you, Sarah. Colin, I'm just going to chime in because I had a related thing and then you. So, Sarah, you mentioned the registry was for caregivers of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Is that solely what it's for and I'm curious what is the distinction?

>>Sarah Nechamen: Right now it is only for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and specifically for caregivers working with the Department of Developmental Services in some way. That's because the registry is new. It only started this past July and we're hoping to expand it, but we had to start at a more limited place to get it through the legislature.

>>Bonnie: Thank you.

So, Colin then Jamie.

>>Thank you so much. I'm with the disability policy consortium and one of our board members asked why DPPC didn't cover people who were both disabled and over 60 and what should occur in cases where abuse of people in that population occurs.

>>Sarah Nechamen: So the reason is just that there are different agencies for different age ranges. It's been like that since these agencies were created. If somebody is over 60 and has a disability, that would still go to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, or EOEA. So they cover folks over 60 whether they have

a disability or not.

>>And do you work with them on sort of how to appropriately investigate potential abuse against disabled seniors?

>>Sarah Nechamen: We are currently working on a couple different projects that are a little broader in scope, one national, one more on a state level, to get more people more information with working with people with disabilities at all ages and we're working with, you know, EOEA and similar agencies on both of those.

>>Good. Thank you.

>>Sarah Nechamen: Uh- huh.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Colin. Jamie.

>>This is Jamie Perconti. I have a couple of questions. First, I want to clarify, so is DPPC only oversight for professional caregivers? Like many people with disabilities have people in their families that take care of them or otherwise people who are not, you know, doing it professionally.

>>Sarah Nechamen: It is any caregiver, it does not have to be professional, as long as that person is helping with some daily living needs, that often is a family member and often is unpaid.

>>Okay. So is the Commission able to recommend services if the situation is not determined to be abuse?

>>Sarah Nechamen: Generally not. These protective services are typically for when we do find that abuse happened.

>>Are you able to put people in need in touch with the appropriate organizations, or what happens in a circumstance like that?

>>Sarah Nechamen: We do a lot of connecting people with relevant resources and relevant agencies.

>>All right. Thank you.

>>Sarah Nechamen: Uh- huh.

>>Bonnie: Thank you. And Lian.

>>Hi, this is Lian. I just had a quick question about mandated reporters. I know you had the list of various people who would be considered mandated reporters and things like, you know, school teachers. And I was just curious, is a mandated a reporter a mandated reporter for all context or would someone like, you know, an elementary school teacher be a mandated reporter for specifically child abuse but not other things?

>>Sarah Nechamen: It would be for specifically adults with disabilities. So being a mandated reporter for DPPC does not automatically make them a mandated reporter for DCF for child abuse. A lot of it -- a lot of the professions are mandated for both, but it's not complete overlap.

>>Lian: Okay. And is that just by profession or is that a, like there is a -- you have to get like certified as a mandated

reporter?

>>Sarah Nechamen: For DPPC, it's just by profession. I know some other agencies, a different shade between whether you're licensed or not. But for us, it's just based on what your job duties are. It even includes interns and volunteers.

>>Lian: So DPPC mandated reporter is not necessarily the same thing as, like, hearing about a mandated reporter at a school kind of thing?

>>Sarah Nechamen: Right.

>>Lian: Okay. Thank you for the clarification.

>>Sarah Nechamen: Uh- huh.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Thank you. Thank you so much, Sarah, for this presentation. And we did send the material out earlier, but if anybody didn't receive it and wants a copy, myself or Adrienne would be happy to send it out again. The agenda is pretty packed, so I'm going to move us along.

Next we have Jeff Dougan from the Massachusetts Office on Disability. And I am going to see if I can give you screen sharing, or actually I'm not seeing. Adrienne, can you --

>>Jeff Dougan: I was already made a cohost so I could share my screen, so I'm going to share and go over. Let me start with hi. I am glad to be here. I am Jeff Dougan the Assistant Director For Community Services at the Massachusetts Office on Disability. So one of my duties here is meeting with commissions and going over some of that and I wanted to make sure I am on target Bonnie for keeping up with the time, because I know you have a packed agenda.

I'm going to go over some of the critical documents I think that I would like to share with the Commission and I also want to offer some time for questions and answers should there be any related to it.

I just want to validate a couple of things. It looks like Somerville has adopted both the Mass General Laws chapter 40 section 8J, which formally establishes a Commission on Disabilities, as well as setting up the resolving account under 22- G. Is that correct? Do you collect parking fines from --

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. We -- so the City Council did approve that earlier this year. We are in the process of figuring out administratively how to work with the city on that and at the bottom of today's agenda we'll be touching on how we might use those funds and we'll expect to have a more robust discussion next month on in that.

>>Jeff Dougan: When you get into that discussion if you have any questions what the monies can be used for, by all means reach out, I will chat with you. Basically, it has to be used for usually municipal projects or municipal related types of things because of the antiaid agreements and stuff like that, public funds being

used for private but there is a cut out if you are going to benefit all the businesses in Somerville for the public good. You could use it for public good if that was the outcome. If you have creative ideas, be creative because I know the Commission I serve on we've been doing a lot of assistive technology for the library, for the library of things and stuff like that, so we've been buying adaptive equipment.

We're buying a true grit wheelchair for our trails and we're -- one of the applicants from our ADA improvement grant program was applying for that and I saw that and I was like we have about four or \$5,000, it might be a good thing to invest in. We have invested in beach mats and beach wheelchairs because we're on the coast. So there is good and creative and outreaching and good feeling kind of initiatives you can do with that. But we'll chat if you need.

I also want to just, because I don't think I've been to the Somerville Commission before. I don't have any records of it. I've been with MOD since about 2000. Can you remind me Bonnie, I have a lot of commissions I'm working with recently, how old is the Commission or how old is the membership? Is it a new membership or --

>>Bonnie: So I have been on the Commission, Colin could probably tell you better than I can, but I want to say three or four years. And Colin's been around for quite some time and is not currently a commission member because of term limits, but will be voted back in as an associate commissioner this evening.

And Lian and Katie is not here, but there's a couple of folks that have been here for about two years. And Brian as well I think has been here about two, two- and- a- half years. And then Holly is pretty new. So it varies.

>>Jeff Dougan: All right. But it's a newer, you weren't around in the 1980s. Right?

>>Bonnie: The Commission's been around since the '90s, I believe, but has gone through a long period of stagnancy prior to the past few years.

>>Jeff Dougan: All right. That leads me to a very good conversation I want to have about the materials I'm sharing.

>>Bonnie: Can I pause you for one second. Colin, did you want to add something?

>>It's fine. I was going to say I think I first met you around 2014, and I was at the time the new kid on the Commission and there were people then who I think had been on in one form or another since the '90s.

>>Jeff Dougan: Okay. So Somerville has been active but there's times it goes defunct or membership goes -- that's the issue, finding the volunteers to serve because it is a big stretch,

and making the membership fit, so that's tough as well. Hopefully with Somerville you have a good laundry list of people who want to serve and volunteer their time where you can fill those seats accordingly.

The materials I'm going to go over with you, and you can share this Bonnie tomorrow, I'll send this to you tomorrow and there will be additional items on that list that I'm not going to be able to get to today. This list is kind of an orientation packet that new commissions or new members should kind of get in their portfolio as they join or work with -- or start their work on a Commission on Disabilities.

So I want to show you, you'll get this, it's about 18 or 19 documents. Everything is going to be e-mailed to you tomorrow. They will have all the links and everything will be there. So there's only one physical attachment and that is for when we get to some tax incentives that are still available for small business for architectural barrier removal or for communication access. So if a business needs to provide a CART reporter or ASL or produce stuff in braille, a small business with I think it's 30 employees or fewer or not -- and did not make over a million dollars last year, so it's, I think it's an or, it's not an and, it's an or, you could have 100 employees and make under a million and qualify, you could have 50 employees and under you would not qualify. But there is a tax deduction for architectural barrier removal as well as communication access. It's a tool for commissions to do outreach and reaching out to small businesses if that's part of the work you want to do.

Let me share my screen. Let me minimize this first before I share. Oh, that doesn't work. Okay. I promise you, I do know how to use this, I think. So just give me one minute while I share. I just didn't want to show everyone -- let me share that. I'm sharing my screen. So I'm going to now try to pull up my Outlook and I don't know where that is. So let me -- what happened here? Oh, did I share? I shared my screen. Well, that's interesting. Let me stop because I don't think this is working. Where did it go? I'm so sorry, people. Just give me a moment.

Okay. Now this should work. I apologize. I've done this a hundred times and now it's just coming back to do it. So let's see here. We got this and we got this. Okay. Perfect. So what I'm hoping is that people are able to see or be able to on the screen there should be a lot of tabs and things like that that are looking at certain documents and different items.

The first one on the screen here, and I'm going to try to scroll in a little bit so it's a little larger, I just wanted to touch upon that with the units and the community services unit that I serve, that I work in, we are setting up trainings for commissions

on disabilities -- I'm sorry -- for community access common core trainings which is a two- day training. We're holding them virtually this year. I want to show you there is a March '22 update we have scheduled three. We have one in June, one in September and one in November.

This is a two- day training that helps people assess a building history and understand the building's responsibility under the various architectural codes, as well as kind of getting a nice overview of the ADA and its various titles, as well as an overview of some disability rights laws. So it's very useful training to go to. And since they're virtual, they are free. And if you're interested, I do see Ashley Santana up here. If you're interested. This link will be shared with you tomorrow to make sure that you get a link directly for this page so you can see it.

And it talks about the in- person and virtual, but this year they're all virtual due to COVID and just our comfortability doing that. I want to share we are setting up regional commission on disabilities again. You will get a link on this page again. However, I have yet to update it which I'm going to, but we are scheduling three regional Commission on Disability regions, one for the east and west side of Massachusetts and can you imagine one in the middle of Massachusetts. We're going to have three here. And over is going to host the east side, Worcester is going to host the central and Pittsfield holds the west side. For you guys it makes sense for the east one, the- and- over, and that's going to be in June.

The reason I'm telling you that this is great learning opportunities we offer from MOD. We're doing more and more trainings as we develop these and I just wanted to show you our page that we have for trainings and events. Again, I'm not going to scroll too fast but we have employment workshop series that people can sign up for. We have an upcoming level of up on quality for municipal ADA coordinators that our GC is going to provide and we try to do those once or twice, three times a year. We have work experience stuff, emergency preparedness. You can see there are a lot of trainings we offer that we've increased to offer and will offer additional trainings as we go because we now have a new communications and training coordinator.

So I want to show you just briefly the MOD brochure. This is again going to be included there. We've got different trainings again listed over in the more information section. We've got ways you can follow us on our web, Twitter, blog and YouTube and some of our major functions and duties and where these play out. So I just wanted to share that with you.

I want to move this -- I'd the panel. Hide video panel, no that's not right. I'm sorry, I'm just trying to -- perfect, I

want to get to the tabs underneath.

Let me start first with some of the General Laws that you've adopted because this is always something you would want to have on hand at least as a Commission to know what you've got here. I'm assuming Somerville adopted 8J in a way that is similar to this. So it's, it is something that Somerville would enact and did I think probably, I'm trying to remember, it wouldn't have been town meeting but City Council.

And section 8J lays out the ground work for commissions, laze out the membership, goals and objectives of the Commission, as well as how the make up of the Commission and the terms for the commissions. The one thing I do want to say, I'm only bring this up because I've seen this in our local town, we've had a couple of these in recent years where we've been donated money from somebody who has been passed away with that money earmarked for disability- related tasks for it. A commission may receive gifts of the property both real and person in the name of city and town subject to the approval of City Council or selectman depending on which form of government and managed and controlled by the Commission as well. So that isn't a separate general law, it's just something tagged on at the end of 8J under the Massachusetts General Laws so it's a good things to keep on hand. I promise you I'll take a break in a moment to see if there are questions so far because I want to make sure I'm not missing that as well as I present.

I want to show you the other one that Somerville has adopted, section 22G which allows some or all of the parking fines that are collected for people illegally parking, the one to \$300 fine. Funds are deposited into a separate account, a special account that resolves from year to year and doesn't revert back and allows the Commission to use that monies, they make the recommendations for the use of those monies.

Obviously, for the -- and here it does dictate or it talks about for the so purposes of benefiting people with disabilities. And once they make that recommendation, the city would determine whether that is a legal use of the money, like private funds for -- or public funds for private business they probably wouldn't because it's not financially, it's not something under the financial system that would be allowed.

Typically once you make the recommendations, it's pretty much a standard process for them to -- for them to -- I'm sorry -- for them to accept it and then move it on. Sometimes it's just line item to line item, from one department to another. But it's, again, these two establishing or the establishing legislation here under 8J and the parking fines under 22G are good useful things to have in your guide.

Let me just pause here for a second. I can't see if hands are raised. If somebody is monitoring just to make sure if there is I can stop or interrupt me.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. I saw Holly raise her hand and then I've got a question after Holly.

>>Jeff Dougan: Okay. So let's start right back in, sure.

>>Hi, Jeff. It's nice to see you again.

>>Jeff Dougan: Nice seeing you.

>>I have a question. You said 8J most likely was adopted by the city. If you choose to adopt this piece, is it in the entirety or is a city or municipality allowed to edit?

>>Jeff Dougan: So it's my understanding that this is enabling statute, so a town can choose to take it on as part of their local zoning or bylaws. It's my understanding that limitedly, they can't change the purpose, but you can definitely solidify certain things. For example, when we talk about the five to nine members, or now it's five to 13 members, some towns have opted to make it seven and that's a hard and fast number. Some towns have, and I'm trying to think, to get it off the top of my head, some towns have put some restrictions in here that I'm not sure would fly muster but it's passed through. This is adopted either through City Council or town meeting.

So I think it's attorney general or the secretary of state will validate those adoptions and make sure they were adopted legally and appropriately and stuff like that. If Somerville did adopt it, it did go through the vetting process. I don't think too much would change other than setting up numbers or local things like they will meet every two weeks or some other conditions that they placed additionally in there, without changing too much of this.

>>And some of this seems to also be incorporated in our bylaws, which the commissioners have the ability to modify. Is that --

>>Jeff Dougan: Definitely.

>> -- is that typical to see that similarity?

>>Jeff Dougan: Definitely. You're actually going to see one of these, and I'm going to show you sample bylaws that you can use that we have. But these six goals that are here, we've expanded it to ten under our guidance and you can -- you know, this is really the role of the Commission on Disabilities, to research local problems, coordinate and carry out programs, to work with MOD, and to make recommendations about policies. There is a lot of things here a commission can do. We've built that out. We'll get to that in the next document I'm going to share with you. The rest of the things I have here are just bonus kind of benefits for commissions and I'll touch upon them more quickly.

And one of the items is talking about setting up your own

bylaws and I believe you guys have probably already done it, but I'm going to show it and share it with you as well anyway. Does that answer, Holly, is that okay? Okay. Bonnie, whenever you're ready.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Jeff. So I just had a question about, you know, usage of the parking funds. I think you can speak to your own commission and possibly you've worked with others. Do you tend to go with, you know, this is what we're going to spend for the year, or is it more when a project or potential project comes up you run it by City Council to make sure that it's within, you know, the legal confines and you do it as a one-off basis? I'm just curious the approach to how that money is spent.

>>Jeff Dougan: So we oftentimes it's departments, they've kind of learned that the Commission on Disability has some funding available. We've had some departments approach us proactively to say, hey, with the library, we have library of things, we could really use some iPads because they have great accessibility features built in and things we can do with it. They will come to us and ask us and we'll look at what our balance is currently and how that plays out.

We oftentimes though, towards the middle of the year we will start to look as a Commission and come up with ideas on how to expend this money on our own because we've got a bunch of things. One, we also have a bunch from the town that we are able to use for training, for training purposes to train members, to buy some resources for the Commission for carrying out its business, as well as for events.

We actually have an event fund because we're going to be doing a Disability Awareness Day hopefully this day so we're start to go plan that. That actually is not touched by the 22G funds, which it could as long as you can make the argument it's going to benefit people with disabilities and it's doing an educational fair, doing the work of the Commission technically is benefitting the community.

So if you needed to like buy a smart level for the Commission on disabilities to go out and measure slopes more accurately, that is something that will benefit the city, but it's from the Commission. So using those funds could potentially be used for that because it will benefit everybody.

Where was I going with that? I was going with that that we -- so we kind of have both that come in. This year or this round at least, this, I'm trying to think, from January really, we've been looking at getting ready for springtime, so that's why we've been looking at the grit wheelchair which will pretty much reduce our 22G fund a fair amount, but it's a really good tool and device, because they have been doing developing of the outdoor

recreation areas so we're hoping that's going to benefit people once they know it's available.

So it's kind of both, kind of mix. You being a larger city, though, once departments know of this and depending on what you fund the bills to and in reality our Commission, we collect, you know, we don't collect a whole lot. At the end of the year we might have six or \$7,000, although we've had an uptick of handicap fines during COVID, I can't explain it but people are parking illegally and getting ticketed during COVID, not sure why, but you guys might see a huge influx, depending what your agreement is with the city sometimes there is a negotiation what comes back to the Commission.

I don't know what the fine is currently for the parking illegally, is it a 100 or 200 -- you may not know yet.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. I'm not certain. I think it's 200, but I would have to look at it. I know that there is a substantial balance, but we have not seen the breakdown of yearly at this point.

>>Jeff Dougan: Okay. All right.

>>Bonnie: But thank you. Let's move into --

>>Jeff Dougan: Sure. Let me get to the big document that I really want to focus on. These are local officials guides. It's good for quick synopsis. It also shows you, by the way, how the fines are -- how it actually ends up at the Commission. So while you're not going to be adopting these two because you've already done it, or even appointing members, but on the back side of this slide, of this what I'll be sharing with you talks about the flow, the work flow for how funds get from the office of writing tickets To the Commission on Disabilities line item for that. So it's a good useful tool there.

Benefits, again, a nice handout for new members or people interesting in serving. Disability rights laws. Did I forget where that went? I promise you, it is -- okay. I'm going to stop here and go find that document again. But disability rights laws in Massachusetts. Another great resource. It's actually being updated but it lists a lot of the various laws. And let's say you were curious about the Massachusetts Protection Act, you will click on this, here's the statute with a nice summary underneath and this is how you can reach them. We do that and everything from abuse to wheelchair lemon laws to automobile incentives and things like that. So it's a great resource to share, especially if you're asked about something you might not be an expert on, you could delve into here to see if there is certain areas of information.

And I found the document, so let me zoom in a little bit so we can see this. And again, this material, all of these things will be shared after the event. So on this, this is an old document

and I need to update the director. Our new director is Mary Ann -- and she's been with us two, two- and- a- half years at this point. She came from MRC. These still hold true. So the first page is really some applicable laws that we've kind of already touched upon and the reasons and rationale for having an advisory board like a Commission on disabilities within a community. As we go further on from page 2 on, we'll have sample operating bylaws and these are relatively old but they're really cookie cutters and you just want to make sure they are consistent.

I have found in here where we talk about meetings will be held six times a year, where that probably doesn't make sense for at least for Somerville, and even now, even for smaller communities, they're usually meeting about ten times a year and taking off the summer months for the heat and the winter months for the cold or the holidays, stuff like that. But these are and can be used. I believe you guys have already created your bylaws so this might be kind of moot. If you think you missed something, it's a way to bolster or build it up if you want to revisit that.

This is right from pretty much the law itself, so we tried to expand it out a little bit further and make sure it's like item by item. So this is what would show up right from the -- this is language almost right out of the general law itself. And when Bonnie, I think, or Holly was mentioning it before, the bylaws that have been adopted kind of adopted like this, but it's right from 8J, from the 8J law.

Membership, there is a membership makeup. You're beyond this, now it's three- year terms for members. The membership is made up of, I'm sorry, for this one they were looking at seven members, but that's a fluid number depending on your commission. But the majority of members shall consist of peoples with disabilities to serve on the Commission. One member may be the member of an immediate family or a person of a person with a disability and one member shall an elected or appointed official in the city or town. So those particular seat makeups are one of the things that have to be adhered to, which can be difficult for commissions to fill those sits with people majority being disabilities and one being the family member and one member being an elected or appointed official. In small towns it's difficult to get volunteers. Hopefully in Somerville you're not finding it difficult to fill the vacant seats.

It seems like you have a pretty good -- you have associates in the background and maybe once a seat opens up they can fill that. I'm not sure how that works on your commission. But we've seen that happen in other commissions where they're grooming people as an associate and then as seats become available, qualified people move into the vacancies. So it's a good preemptive strike to deal

with that to get that in line. I've seen other commissions, especially smaller ones start it up, too, to try to get friends of the Commission so they can tailor and groom them to serve on the Commission.

Again, the terms are here. I'm not going to go through all of these, but I do want to talk about the officers section which, you know, the voting of the chairperson. These are the duties that the chairperson typically does, what the Vice Chair would do, what the secretary does and what the treasurer shall do. They all lay that out pretty much I believe annually, I think, or depending on what Somerville requires, there should be an annual election of officers, usually a typical time to do that.

As well as some of the meetings. Again, this is where I kind of laugh because six times a year, it's hard to get stuff done when you're only meeting six times a year. Most commissions are meeting ten to eleven times a year. I don't think I have any commissions meeting double, like twice a month. But regular meetings shall be quorum exists of the majority of members, right, so depending on your number. This is for seven members would be four members would need to be present. Again, I'm not going to go through all of these, meeting minutes and special meetings can be called by the chair or by any three members. So there's a lot of things here. The rules of order, Roberts Rules of Order are what's typically followed as the procedural. Obviously we have open meeting requirements that, again, you tailor this but you want to make sure things are posted as well.

This is a nice built in section to allow should there be a want to change some of the former bylaws. There's an article there for allowing for memberships and how that is processed through a two-thirds vote. You can set that up however you like. These are examples but it's a starting point for new commissions or commissions to make sure they're in line with what 8J and what the state would recommend as bylaws for Commissions on disabilities. Yes.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. I have a question about the officers.

>>Jeff Dougan: Sure.

>>Bonnie: So, for instance, like I know City Council has an outside secretary that is not a council member. Is this something that commissions are required to have the officer positions filled by members or is that something that can be modified by the bylaws?

>>Jeff Dougan: Let me make sure. Like for the chairperson, Vice Chair, secretary and treasurer position?

>>Bonnie: For our Commission specifically, we've had some issues in terms of a secretary because we have not had a lot of people on our Commission historically and we have had a lot of

people with people with disabilities that would prevent them from being able to focus on the meeting and take decent notes. Right now our city appointee is our secretary but sometimes that presence a conflict of interest, because he's also the director of engineering and needs to recuse himself for some things, at which point we're kind of left scrambling of who's going to do that.

And we just kind of wonder if there's a way to modify bylaws, like if that's legally allowable so that we could maybe have a city staff person or an associate member as an accommodation for disabilities to be able to be appointed secretary.

>>Jeff Dougan: I almost think that that doesn't need a change to the bylaws. I think that in -- again, I'm using my -- you know, I've been on that commission for about I think now I'd have to look an back, I think 15 years at this point, and prior when we were first -- not first starting out but when I first joined there was a person from the town that would attend the meeting and take minutes and do all of that stuff and wasn't a voting member, but it was kind of nice because we could get some of the -- when we asked oh, the DPW was doing something, this person was a great resource saying yeah, they're going to do this, fill us in on details that we as a Commission might not know about.

But we lost that person about four or five years ago. So now we've had to have a secretary that actually does the minutes and that's fallen to me as the recording secretary on the Commission. But it doesn't -- so one, if you are doing it as an accommodation to a member who might be voted in as a secretary or as an opportunity for the Commission as a whole, having a staff person assigned, that might be something to investigate to see if there's someone that might be able to attend the meeting every month at 6:30 p.m. to take the minutes.

You may also want to ask if an associate member could be, maybe not the recording secretary, but take the minutes for someone voted in as the secretary or just to take the members so all the members can focus on the matters at hand while not worrying about taking notes.

Just as simple as that. It's not that the secretary -- I know personally for me when I'm trying to capture the minutes or notes I might be missing the topic or missing a -- not being able to focus fully on what's being discussed and I would want to because I can weigh in on some of those things. It might make sense to approach your appointed authority, which is the mayor or City Council, who ever your liaison might be at City Council, to see if a record -- I don't want to say as an accommodation, but as a modification for the procedure for the Commission can we allow somebody who is not an voting member take the minutes. That may be something to run up the flag pole. They may come back with yes,

you need that in your bylaws and that will correct me. Please let me know if that happens because I would like to know that from a practical experience.

>>This is Ginny. Can I share what PTAC does in regards to handling the minutes and that sort of thing?

>>Bonnie: Sure. That would be great.

>>Generally, our secretary every month, alternates members of the community to go ahead and take minutes. We have city officials who attend our meetings regularly. And on more than one occasion we've had Brian to make presentations. I attend this Commission as PTAC's Vice Chair and find myself sometimes trying to figure out what slides really are for a very obvious reason. I'm totally blind.

But we -- our secretary assigns every month someone on the committee to go ahead and take meeting minutes, and city officials attend and make presentations to us every month.

>>Jeff Dougan: That is an option as well. I believe there are some membership Bonnie that may have difficult with that, so you want to make it a fair process.

>>Bonnie: Yeah.

>>Jeff Dougan: If there's an associate that really wants to work it out, you probably could do it. Just check with the higher ups to make sure that would be appropriate. And allowed legally for the minutes, I don't know if it has to be a personal member of the Commission, but I would expect as a accommodation to the Commission or a help out to the Commission someone taking minutes outside of the board itself might be helpful.

>>Bonnie: Thank you.

>>Jeff Dougan: All right. So we've got the positions here. We've gone over the meetings. We've gone over some of the amendments. Now, when we talked about 8J there were those six listed items of kind of goals or responsibilities or things that a commission can take on. So you as a Commission and commission made up of volunteers, you have only the expertise that you bring to the table here. If you don't have an architect on the Commission, you know, reviewing architectural plans might be a little bit of an issue, although there are tools you as a Commission could go to or sign up for or send a member to. The New England ADA center does do plan review trainings that could maybe help you understand how to look over a set of plans.

But if you don't -- you know, that can be something that you might not have, like the expertise you might not have at the table. So these goal, some of those goals might be, okay, goal one might say granted I'm going to say you can do that. Let's try goal two --

>>Bonnie: Jeff, can I just say, if you're talking about a specific goal, can you please instead of saying goal one and goal

two actually talk about the specifics because we do have a couple of folks who definitely cannot see this and also you're moving quickly, so I just want to make sure people get the full content.

>>Jeff Dougan: Thank you. And I appreciate that. I'm sorry that I was going rapid fire there. So there are about nine or ten goals. I wasn't going to go over all of them but I do want to talk about a couple and use a couple as some examples.

So the first goal is ensure municipal services, programs, meetings and employment opportunities are available and accessible to persons with disabilities, and underneath that there are six bulleted items that talk about how that might happen.

For example, you know, meeting with the appropriate staff, the ADA Coordinator, select board, mayor, city town planning staff, building inspector, other departments and town, making your presence known. That is something a commission does need to do is to go to some of these big meetings and just introduce yourself as either the chair or representative sent on behalf of the Commission to those meetings to just have a minute to say we're here to help and we're here to advise to these other town departments.

It also potentially as a goal surveying all municipal buildings, facilities and sidewalks for access. That does take a skill and that's where I would offer up our community access monitor training, as well as our potential people take the community access monitor training. We are now offering something called the advanced CAM training for members who have taken the two- day training that goes into deeper analysis of like the building history and goes through case examples and really shows people how to measure stuff and do measurements and how to report them back. It's a developing program we are doing and we are setting up about five this year. And I will make sure that commissions are notified when slots open up for seats there.

So there's goals on this. There's about ten goals in this entire document. The first goal again lists six different items, but on the first goal of ensures municipal services, programs and activities, prioritizing what needs to be done, especially expensive building renovations and be aware of new programs, services or construction, to work with the individuals to try to advocate for improving accessibility. Again, that's some physical, but don't forget about communication access, there's that stuff, too. Making sure there is appropriate accommodations for individuals, attending town meetings or wanting to and wanting to participate in town government.

And the bulleted items to tell you how to accomplish that goal, we list a few examples. Not everyone has as many as the first goal here, but this one has about six or seven goals, I'll read

the first three. All public meetings should be held in accessible locations, you know, that's obvious, open meeting law requirement, but it's something you as a Commission should know about.

Emergency services -- let me make sure I'm reading to the good ones -- emergency services, such as police and fire departments, should have telecommunication devices for people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. From what I understand now, the 911, and I'm supposed to get information from one of my colleagues on this because they just got Um dated, but 911 system is changing a little bit. I believe they're accepting text to 911. You have to check and see if Somerville is enrolled in that from the 911 commission or 911 department at the state.

They are allowing now cell phones to, one, get to rather than a central calling center, it will be hopefully funneled to a local what they call PSAPS, where the 911 calls go and get routed. So hopefully with the cell phone calls to 911 should be going more locally rather than centrally and having them redirect the call from a central location back to your local community. But they are also now starting up with text to 911, that is a very good tool.

The disability indicator form. I will come back to you, Holly, I see your hand up. But the disability indicator form that people will fill out to, when you call 911 from your home phone or from your home, certain identifiers come up that you've aloud 911 to know about. They are general categories, typically mobility, hearing, vision, cognitive. They're very limited what details they give. But if you do that and you're calling from it used to be a landline, the 911 operator would get a code up there so they could tell somebody approaching your residence or your building for some sort of 911 call that they kind of know that they're approaching, maybe somebody who may have mobility concerns or someone who may not hear them knocking at the front door.

So there's things like that that will help your first responders, so working with that, the 911 indicator form now does have a cell phone number that you can list as well. So that's kind of good. It's a big change that happened recently. It was just land lines that could be registered with the 911, but now it can be cell phones as well.

So each goal that we list here talks about some of the ideas of reaching the goals, as well as giving some examples of how that goal might be reached or what examples that might show up.

So with this, there are ten goals here and some of these goals may not be something that a commission has the expertise to deal with on the local commission. So what that means would be that, you know, let's say increasing affordable accessible housing or accessible affordable housing, that's a hard task to overcome and that may be something you as a Commission says, you know, we're

not really going to be able to focus on this, although -- I'm sorry, Holly, I promise I'll come back to you after this -- that, you know, we'll work with the housing authority, developers and things like that, but this may be something if we get questions or things like that we may have to refer out to another entity.

>>Bonnie: This is -- Holly, your question and then I want to chime in on this.

>>Jeff Dougan: Okay. Perfect. Holly, whenever you're ready. Sorry.

>>No. No. Bonnie, why don't you go now because it's relevant to this than mine was before.

>>Jeff Dougan: I'm sorry. I'll come back.

>>Bonnie: That's all right. Yeah. So I think as a Commission we've got a fair amount of expertise and a fair amount of interest in a lot of these things. And the things that we struggle with are the city recognizing that and incorporating our feedback and, you know, I'm wondering if you have thoughts on that, other commissions that maybe have struggled with similar. Because, you know, we all understand that the goal of the state laws was to enable commissions to exist. And Somerville has adopted them, but I think there's a disconnect between adopting them and actually making good use of the Commission.

And that's kind of where we struggle. I think we -- we know a lot of the things that need focusing on, but it's really making that connection between us wanting to do that work and the city wanting to value that work.

>>Jeff Dougan: Okay. So here's where it can help and maybe this is something that I can try to help you with off-line as well. But I think the first step, if you haven't done it already or as new members -- as chairs take over, and Bonnie, I know you're there, I'm not sure how long you've been there or when the next chair might be taking over, however, but when a new chair is elected through the elections and things like that, it may make sense at that time to often show up at some of the regularly scheduled meetings and get on their agendas. And you may have already done that.

>>Bonnie: Yeah. There's not a lack of awareness.

>>Jeff Dougan: All right.

>>Bonnie: I think everybody on City Council and everybody in the Mayor's Office and most people that are department heads of a department in the city are certainly aware of my existence and the Commission as a whole. You know, we have one City Councillor here this evening and many others aware and engaged and working really hard, but it all comes down to it's at the mayor's discretion as to whether or not to require city departments to work with us. And that's --

>>Jeff Dougan: I mean, that's pretty difficult. You are an advisory board. I mean, that is the first step. And to properly advise your appointing authority or your town or city really, you need to have those connections with the highway department or the housing authority, school department, town hall. A lot of different people and departments, pretty much all, you should be at the table then. There isn't anything you should be exempted from because as a Commission you're representing, you're a voice of people with disabilities in your community.

And that touches everything. It touches, you know, business conducted at town hall -- I'm sorry, I'm saying town hall, but at city hall. Or it actually, emergency planning is the Commission part of that process, are you working with the local emergency management director. There's a lot of departments that commissions can weigh in on even though you're not an enforcement agency, you're a voice of reason, a voice of community that may not have a voice to fight on behalf of their needs or their concerns the way that the Commission on Disabilities can. You do have a lot of members here. I don't know their expertise but some of the people I've seen, they appear -- I know Colin, Colin's a wealth of expertise. I don't know everybody here, but I do know a few and there is good expertise here at the table.

So to not take that as a -- to take that benefit that's being offered or being reached out to offer, that can be a little discouraging. Because it's not like you're going to slap anybody across the wrist on if they did something wrong. You're just really there to be the extra set of eyes and extra voice to make sure people aren't being forgotten in how city is being run and small businesses if that's where you want to put your focus as well.

The primary ones I think are the City Council would be where you would want that collaboration. You'd also want it from, if you could, get it from the Mayor's Office as well. They are the ultimate executive teams that can filter down your needs or your requests. So if they were to give you kind of a go-ahead to reach out to various boards and commissions, which you shouldn't really have to seek permission, but, you know, I think since it's three or four years old, you may want to talk with your liaison from City Council to say this is what we're thinking of doing and what we would want to do and how can we make this happen would be really a first step.

And some of the big ones --

>>Excuse me, Jeff. Can I interject. My name is Harriotte. Many years I worked at MOD and I'm blind as well. Here's the thing, I worked in city politics for four years and gotten four new people on City Council with our revolution Somerville. Now the issue is this, if the mayor doesn't consent or recognize us as a valid

commission, nothing will happen and often nothing does happen. So we may just be screwed by our own charter. But anyway, have you not encountered this issue where City Council can be very supportive of what we're trying to bring forward as what people with disabilities need from the city itself? I mean, I'm very new and I'm really a visitor here, but I'm well aware of the frictions that are there and how ridiculous it is, if you'll excuse my bluntness.

Have you not run into a place where in some fashion the Commission is blocked by either the council or the mayor?

>>Jeff Dougan: We've run into it. I won't say it's super common, but it's not uncommon. It's not a rarity. It does happen. It's whether they get spooked by something that got raised to them and they're nervous about it or they had maybe a bad experience with a prior commission where they feel we really have to reign them in and control them. You know, the intent of the Commission is advisory, so there should really be no hard feelings between anybody and no willingness to accept the work of the Commission because it's advisory.

It's up to you -- you are raising that up to the next level and it's ultimately up to them, and actually, hang on one second. I think we maybe lost the chair, so let me wait until -- oh, okay.

>>Bonnie: No, you didn't.

>>Related to penalties or --

>>Jeff Dougan: This is where it gets difficult.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Can we please -- I think we're coming up on -- we have like maybe five more minutes to devote to this. So I don't want to go too far into the weeds on this. I think I would be interested in a further conversation off line that I can then report back on on what those other commissions did and whether or not they were able to, you know, sort of fix that relationship with the city.

But I think -- I think we're not going to get all of the answers we want to have tonight. And I want to make sure that if there's anything else you really wanted to present, Jeff, you have a couple of minutes to do that.

>>Jeff Dougan: Well, I think we're having a really good conversation, so I don't want to delve off this. All of these things, after this one it's really going to be moved on to supporting documents. There's really good documents out there that will help you understand Title II responsibilities for a city and town. There's the ADA checklist from the New England ADA center that would help you evaluate like if the Commission got asked to, hey, can you look at the bathroom to see if it complies with the ADA. Well, there's a good 30, 40 questions that will ask you yes or no questions that will let you do that little audit of

it and it will give you a yes or no so it's simple.

Some of those things I was showing, but I think I want to maybe -- let me stop sharing because I would like to come back to the group and make sure we, whatever time you want to give me Bonnie, and that could be five more minutes to kind of touch upon. Yes, I would very much look forward to an off line discussion with you and then we can figure out how MOD can help support the Commission in Somerville the best we can. All right?

>>Bonnie: Great. Thank you. I see Colin with a raised hand and if there's time, I've got a follow-up question. But I want to make sure anybody else who had something can get in there as well.

>>This is Colin. Do the materials include information on the municipal ADA improvement grant?

>>Jeff Dougan: It does. Or it will. I'll make sure it is. There's a link to the program. We are currently, the grant program is currently closed for this cycle because we're dealing with awards now and we expect the FY '23 cycle to open up in August of this year.

>>Great. Thank you.

>>Jeff Dougan: You'll find a link there. It should be there. If you're interested in being personally notified when this grant cycle opens up or when we advertise it, if you can e-mail me directly, I'll pass it on to our access specialist to add you to the notification list. You might get 50 of them, but I'd rather that than not get notified at all. This grant program say wonderful program.

>>Absolutely. I know it's highly competitive, but I just think it's something the city hasn't always applied for and I would love to see if we apply for it every year because there are things we can --

>>Jeff Dougan: Definitely. When you see what we offer and what we've funded in the past, it's a great program. I know we run it. But it really is. We've given like two million dollar back to the Commonwealth, for barrier removal or communications fixes.

Holly, let me come back to you. I'm sorry.

>>Don't apologize. That's fine. From what I've read, we are subject to open meeting laws.

>>Jeff Dougan: Yes.

>>And --

>>Jeff Dougan: You are fully, as a board and commission, you are obligate to the open meeting laws.

>>So therefore, all the things like we're being recorded right now, we should have access to those and they should be posted online to the public?

>>Jeff Dougan: The recordings I don't know. That I haven't really delved too deeply on the open meeting laws and recordings. It doesn't necessarily mean these recording should be posted. They could be and will be probably. But if they are posted I don't think the -- I think the open meeting law is silent on recording of it except when an individual wants to come and approach Bonnie or to the chair and say I'd like to record this program. The town might be doing this just for keeping a record of it and also posting town meetings online through various portals, or the city I mean.

Is that where you were going with the question or no?

>>I just wanted really to understand. From what I've read, open meeting law absolutely is our swim lane. But also, we've called like a special meeting recently, and that's not an executive meeting. So that is the only thing that I can see if you had an executive meeting that would be excluded of open meeting laws.

>>Jeff Dougan: Well, you have to be careful with that though. There are very specifics reasons to go into executive session, but that also requires certain minutes to be taken and certain outcomes to be explained of why you're going into executive session and what was the result of the executive session while keeping confidentiality. That wouldn't be recorded. A special meeting would be -- like if you call a special meeting because you needed to vote on membership and you needed that by tomorrow, you might not have time because you have to post it 48 hours in advance and Somerville might require longer posted, more than 48 hours. But it has to be posted, meetings have to be taken at special meetings.

>>Since 8J is adopted and we are a municipality that accepts federal funding, it sort of establishes the Commission in the first place, aren't we in a sense federally mandated to --

>>Jeff Dougan: Well, Section 504 is similar -- it's tied to federal funding of a municipality if that's what you were going with. It's the backbone of some of the disability rights movements; right? So it's 504 obviously came before the ADA, so and 504 is similar, has similar administrative requirements for those programs and it covers the entire municipality, if there is a dollar of federal funds coming in. However, the ADA isn't tied to any sort of monies, and I would almost think the ADA more in line adds up to a commission on -- than 504, but they are both federal laws.

I will tell you, though, there are not too many Commission on Disabilities anywhere else in the country though, I don't believe that they're that active out there. So it's not a federal thing that I know of or that I've heard of, but there is some of the backing or some of the reasons for those laws and regulations fall right in line with the mission of a Commission on Disabilities. So you're definitely correct on that in that

aspect.

>>Thank you.

>>Jeff Dougan: And Bonnie, I think you had a follow- up.

>>Bonnie: Yes. But Crystal also raised a hand, so I'd like to go to them.

>>Hi, this is Crystal. I wanted to ask if there is a legal equity issue since other videos are available online and I've never seen the meetings for this Commission available online in video form. I'm not sure why I am also new to this meeting, but as someone who's trying to catch up, I would find that more accessible and certainly the other meetings of the city being available, it feels like an equity issue to me, but I don't know about the legal ramifications.

>>Jeff Dougan: Again, I would -- so everything I've talked about here so far that I know of isn't mandating that a Commission on Disabilities meetings be videotaped and be posted online. So we don't. We don't record our meetings partly because if the public is coming to us and they have some -- I mean it is a public meetings, don't get me wrong, so doing a public video is very accommodating, but some commissions don't always record their meetings.

But if you are recording it, I think it would make sense that it would be posted. But I just don't know if open meeting law, it's like if you do it, you have to do this then, I don't know if that's what open meeting law would say if you record it, it needs to be up on your website. That is something I can look into with the general counsel at MOD to see if that's something there. But if there's something obvious, I will report it back to you about that if open meeting laws require it. I just don't know if it does. Every time I come to a meeting there is a unique question, so that one I have to follow up on.

>>Bonnie: Thank you. Councillor Clingan.

>>Yes, thank you Bonnie, Madam Chair. Just to add some clarity around the discussion now, I don't have a definitive answer but I can give a little bit of background. So right now due to the pandemic, we are operating virtually under the governor's -- under an act by the governor. In that statement that we make, it says that these meetings will be posted at a later time. So that's one separate thing with these recorded meetings that are virtual.

The council itself at some point decided to have all of its committee meetings recorded and then uploaded. That, as far as the commissions and different commissions and, whatever, commissions and other --

>>Jeff Dougan: Boards and commissions, right.

>>That's what I was looking for, boards, boards and

commissions, I believe that would probably fall from the administration mainly because like our clerk's office, we have the clerk, the clerk's office are the ones that handle the recording of the meetings, as well as the minutes, and then they work with the communication department to post them. But ultimately, so when we go back to in- person, that's going to be an issue whether or not there's going to be a hybrid version of all of these meetings or whether or not, even if there is no hybrid, if they're recorded and then posted.

But I would say just to the quick point in answer, as far as these meetings that have happened during the pandemic, I believe most of them have been recorded. And the ones that have been recorded should be posted online.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Councillor Clingan. All right. Thank you.

>>Jeff Dougan: I think you guys have more stuff to get to on your stuff.

>>Bonnie: Yeah.

>>Jeff Dougan: So Bonnie, what I would just offer up, fire off an e- mail to me and we'll set up a time to chat. And if I need to come back to a commission meeting, we can work that out as well.

>>Bonnie: Thank you so much.

>>Jeff Dougan: Colin, it's been a while, but it's good to see you.

>>It's like five years. Great to see you, Jeff.

>>

>>Jeff Dougan: And Holly, I've seen you as well. Nice to see you. Other people I've seen. It's tough. Faces blend together. Have a great night and I will talk to you guys soon. So you'll get an e- mail from me later, tomorrow close of business or end of the week at the latest.

>>Bonnie: Sounds great. Thank you.

>>Jeff Dougan: Thanks, everybody.

>>Bonnie: All right. Next order of business, I will do a very, very brief report. So at the last special meeting we voted Pauline Downing in as an associate commissioner and all agreed that we'd like to recommend her as a full commissioner. So I did draft that recommendation and sent that to Adrienne. And I was informed by the city, by Adrienne and Hannah from the Mayor's Office that the city is not currently acting on recommendations.

We are going to get, after I'm done, a report from Adrienne on where those commission appointments stand. But I will say that I've been told by the Mayor's Office that once the posting is up, they will leave it open for four weeks and anybody is welcome to apply again. And Hannah has said that any materials that were used for our evaluation purposes can be submitted and that should be

sufficient.

So I am happy to facilitate putting in Henry and Pauline's materials, and Harriotte has also expressed interest. And I will be working with her to get questions answered so that we can vote on whether or not she would like to be an associate commissioner at the next meeting. And also Jamie as well. So lots of interest. And I think it still will be a little bit of time before anybody is appointed as a full commissioner, but that's where it stands and I wanted to let you all know that the recommendation was made.

Sorry. I'm just looking at the agenda now. I shared with you all, and it was attached to the agenda and meeting materials on the city website, the national ADA center effective communications PDF. That's just talking about accommodations that are available federally. And what city's responsibilities are in terms of communication access. So I wanted to make sure everybody had that. I'm not going to bring it up now given the interest of time.

And then the next thing before moving on to the appointment update is voting Colin in as an associate commissioner. So would somebody like to motion for that, somebody who's not the chair.

>>Brian Postlewaite moves for Colin to be voted in as an associate commissioner to the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

>>Bonnie: I second that motion. All in favor, aye.

>>Aye.

>>Bonnie: All right. And I see a raised hand from Lian as well and from Brian. So the motion passes unanimously. Welcome back, Colin.

>>Thank you. Henry made a very persuasive case for me. Thank you for reaching out about that. So yeah, happy to keep helping out at least for the time being certainly. So yeah, hoping we can get some good things done.

>>Bonnie: Great. Thank you so much. And thank you, Henry. We appreciate that.

All right. So I am going to pass it to Adrienne.

>>Adrienne: Thank you, Chair Denis. I won't take much time because you covered a lot about the appointment process since we did -- you did have some communication from the Mayor's Office recently.

Bonnie is correct, the Mayor's Office is still on pause with that to evaluate the process, not only for this Commission, but all active commissions in the city of Somerville to allow for more equity, inclusion and access across the board.

With that said, I have been told that they are hoping to reopen that process as early as next week. There will be a press release. It will be posted, of course, online. And I believe as well

printed and put in libraries and other city places so we can have open access for interested parties to apply and go through that process.

With that said, of course, with all the conversation with accommodations, if anybody who is interested needs help in any way or an accommodation, that is part of my role at the city to help facilitate that so they can have access to that process. And, of course, utilizing the resource that is the chair of this Commission anybody else to help with that. So that's all I had on that portion.

The other thing that was mentioned a bit earlier, thanks to Jeffrey, is the accessible parking fines fund, and Bonnie did share sort of the history with that. I have spoken with the treasurer, Edward Beam, with the city of Somerville and he is strongly recommending that we all work together with our help to create a budget for these funds because it is pretty significant given the size of Somerville and the parking fines that have been collected.

And there is, thanks to our guest speaker, things you can do with that, as we've been told. Creating the budget would allow you to sort of map out and have a strategic plan about where you want to see the use of this money. And also would allow that to be efficient in that process; that you could maybe host an event, as Jeffrey said, and then you could say we're hosting this event on such and such day and we need a speaker and we need all of these things. And then it goes through and we spend the money and we host the event.

And so that discussion does need some time in order for you all to brainstorm and think about what you would like to see happen with those funds. And given also what Jeffrey said, perhaps involving some other city department leaders to maybe welcome those to the conversations to maybe collaborate, if that's something you want to do. That is up to you. But as I have told Chair Denis, it probably needs to be a pretty lengthy conversation. I don't want to say that it could take a whole meeting or we would have to have a special meeting, because I want to give that choice up to this body. But I would strongly recommend that we either have a meeting later this month or early in April or devote a pretty good chunk of the agenda next month to begin that discussion because we are approaching very much in budget season, as I believe you all know.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Adrienne. I have a quick comment on that. And then I saw Holly and Lian. We are approaching budget season, but I think it's clear that these funds are separate from the city budget.

>>Adrienne: They are.

>>Bonnie: And they are revolving funds, so I don't think it's

critical that we have an entirely laid out plan on how we're going to spend every dollar because the funds exist for our use. The more critical piece from a city perspective I think is ensuring that these funds are in a separate account, which to this point we have not been assured of that, nor have we been told explicit numbers of what those funds look like, when the funds came in, how much they generally receive on an annual basis.

We heard one number quite a while back, but that was unclear for how many years it was. So I think that's -- that's kind of the critical piece in terms of where we sit right now and that's separate from how we're going to spend the funds. But I don't think we need to be tied to budget season because this is not a line item in the budget.

Holly.

>>Sorry. Technical issues. Yeah. This is Holly. Bonnie, I agree with what you've said, we're not required to have a budget aligned with the city's budget. And also, what the Commission does with those fundings is not -- is at our discretion. There's certainly things that we can and can't do, but we're not guided by the city to spend it on something. You know, like it's our fund. We don't have a report of how much it is. We don't have a report of -- I'm not as much concerned about the accounts it's in, but we have no documentation. We can't even get a list of where these handicapped parking spots are.

So I feel like we just don't have the right information, and we also have been waiting months to see this start rolling. And Crystal, I think, posted a link to a news story about tying it to a piece of legislature and then raising the fines, but it was a little bit confusing how it was worded. So I'm just curious, Adrienne, if you know about that, that article, and also when we will have access to the data.

And I think having a plan is good, but I don't think it should be anything that gets in the way of moving forward.

>>Adrienne: I certainly don't disagree with you, Holly. I am just passing on information that I've been told by our treasurer, that they -- it is a separate budget for these funds. It's not a line item in the bigger budget, but they would just like to, you know, for me to work with you to see an outline of how you would like to use those funds so you --

>>Why don't we work directly with the treasurer. I don't understand that.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. I'm going to point out we have just a few minutes left.

>>Adrienne: Sure.

>>Bonnie: I would like to discourage the use of the word "budget." I understand that's what the treasurer is saying to

you, but it's not a budget, it's a revolving fund and those are distinct things. Because a budget suggests that there's a set yearly amount and that's not what this is. It's going to be based on what the fees collected are.

So what we do with it is distinct from there is a budget for us, if it that makes sense. So Lian and Councillor Clingan, if we can make comments brief, unfortunately.

>>Lian: Yeah. This is Lian. I just had I think definitely this is a conversation for another day, but I had a couple clarifying questions so we can think about this before the next meeting. One of them as Bonnie and Holly, y'all mentioned, we have no idea how much money we're actually working with and that makes is really hard to try to plan anything because, like, I have no sense if I'm trying to figure out what do we want to spend \$2,000 on or what do we want to spend \$200,000 on. Like we can't really start planning anything until we know what we're actually working with.

So if it's possible to get us at least a ballpark number prior to when we actually have a larger discussion, that would be really helpful.

And then just a couple of questions around like what we are allowed to spend the money on, which I have -- which I'd asked earlier, but Jeff mentioned that --

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Yeah, some documents have been sent out about that and I think we can share those links again so everybody has that. But we can get further into the weeds on that discussion at the next meeting.

>>Lian: Okay. I just want to mention them really quickly in case it is something that needs research. What constitutes public, so would something that is like the public schools would be allowed to work with that, or is that because it's not for everybody, it's just for, you know, the school- age people, would that not qualify? And then also if there are programs that need to be administered, would we have to do that administration ourselves or could that be sort of like contracted out to either someone in the city or some other organization. So those are the things that I'm wondering about. That is all I have for now.

>>Bonnie: Thank you. Councillor Clingan.

>>Thank you, Madam Chair. So I know that Adrienne is the point person on this, but originally when I put the order in I talked to Brian, the one thing we do know is when they started the collecting from. You know, we couldn't get them to go back a few years of fines, worth of fines, but certainly since the fund was set up.

So as far as I remember, that was -- it would have been last, I don't know, end of summer or I don't know if, Brian, you recall

when that was supposed to, you know, essentially when we were supposed to start keeping track of those fines.

>>Brian: This is Brian. Councillor, I don't recall specifically what that time frame is. We may have it in the minutes. We can go back and look. But I believe it was over the summer that we discussed it or the beginning of the last spring.

>>Right. So I mean with that information, basically in my mind, Madam Chair, basically, you know, if they can give you a start date, ultimately everything that -- you know, my understanding of it, everything that was collected as a fine for non-placard parking that that money would go into a fund and that you all would have access to -- be able to decide what was to happen with that fund. And that could be anywhere from if you wanted to put an RFP out for something. But ultimately that money, as you just heard the gentleman say who came to speak, that that can be interpreted -- that's at your discretion to be interpreted.

So what I'm hearing now seems a little bit different than what I think the way I had been told and the way it was interpreted. So I'm hoping we can all get on the same page about this. I mean, since last summer I don't know what the numbers look like, but, you know, there's got to be some money there to do some good. So hopefully -- and I'd like to know if there is going to be some sort of, you know, restriction or what the -- how the administration sees us going forward. And I can take this to the council and put into board orders, but I want to know more about what the vision is because I have a different -- I have an entirely different -- seems like I have an entirely different idea of understanding of the way it was supposed to go.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Councillor Clingan. Yeah, I think you and the Commissioner are on the same page. It's supposed to go how the general law is written, and perhaps myself and you can, with Adrienne's assistance, start a communication chain with the treasurer so that we can get some clarity on what the funds are and how we put in the request for spending them.

I'd like to not have to file a public records request to find out how much of the funds are there and when we can get reports on them because, as Holly mentioned, we've been asking for quite some time and we've never gotten follow through on that. So we will do that follow up.

Thank you so much, everyone. We are at time. Another packed agenda. This conversation will definitely continue next month, but I hope that by then we have some numbers to work with because I think that's going to be critical, as Lian said, figuring out how we spend them because there's a big difference between 2,000 and 20,000, so.

Look forward to that discussion.

>>Madam Chair, real quick, if I could just -- I'm sorry -- but just on what I was saying earlier, I did post them in the chat what it is that the different commissions read and it doesn't actually state that it will be posted. But I imagine that every one of these meetings that's been recorded, there is no reason why it shouldn't be posted. But you don't state that in the same way as the council states it, so I just wanted to make that clear that it may be different rules for you all.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Councillor Clingan. I think there is again a discrepancy between the Commission's feelings and the administration's feelings, and there is no issue in terms of our city clerk or OMLR office posting it. The issue is we don't have access to the recordings ourselves.

So they have said they would be happy to post it if they're provided, and I know Adrienne was supposed to look into whether or not we can post these recordings. I have not heard anything back on that. I would like to because I think we would all like there to be the recordings. From an access standpoint, there are many of us that have executive function or hearing loss or other disabilities that make engaging with the presentation and remembering and looking at the meeting notes and approving them really difficult without having the recording to refer back to. So I hope that we get an answer on that soon.

Unfortunately, we do need to end. But thank you everyone for a robust discussion. I look forward to seeing you all next month. Holly says in the chat that we have room to improve the communication and transparency of our Commission, and I would agree wholeheartedly with that. So goals.

Great. I am going to -- do I need -- I don't need to motion to end the meeting, do I? I'm sorry that I forget this every time.

>>This is Brian. You do need a motion.

>>Bonnie: I do. Okay. I motion to end this meeting.

>>Brian: I'll second.

>>Bonnie: Great. All in favor?

>>All in favor.

>>Aye.

>>Aye.

>>Aye.

>>Bonnie: Great. Thanks, everyone. See you soon.

[Human realtime captioning by HRI CART.]

[Concluded]